

he dare be proud and presumptuous only at the risk of defeating all the purposes served by his acts of devotion. He sees that, on ceasing to be active, God may probably punish him for his folly by laying an arrest on the expected answer to his petitions.

It is another congruity of this method of providence, that God can so join petition with its answer, that, while the connexion is not observable by his neighbours, it may be traced by the man himself. There is an obvious propriety in such a provision being made, in so delicate a matter as the soul's communing with its Maker. We may observe the same principles in other dealings of God. In providential events, as, for instance, in afflictive dispensations, the individual can see many adaptations to himself which are hid from the eyes of others. There is a special propriety, as it appears to us, in the answer to prayer being conveyed in this way, as a token to the man himself, but which he is not ostentatiously to display before the world, and thereby proclaim himself a favourite of heaven. By the nicely fitted machinery of his providence, God can connect the prayer and its answer by threads which are all but invisible to others, but which are clearly discerned by the man himself.

The same general rules that guide us in looking for an answer to prayer, also guide us in determining the exceptions. It is not our prayer that produces the blessing by its inherent power, but it comes by the special appointment of God, and so we look for an answer only when the request is agreeable to the will of heaven. We always leave a discretion in the hands of God, and every man who knows himself, and the perversity of his desires, will rejoice that there is power left with God, and that he does not promise to grant all our requests. We see, too, how there is a discretion left with God, not only as to whether he will send the blessing, but as to the time, the manner, and

means, in respect of all which the soul is not to dictate to Deity, but patiently to wait upon his pleasure. Nor should it be forgotten that the tie that connects the prayer and its answer is a religious tie; and we are thus reminded that it is only when the prayer is spiritual that it can be expected to bring with it the anticipated blessings.

Nor should it be overlooked that, by these skilful arrangements, God not only answer prayer, but answer it with such an opportuneness of time, place, and mode, that when the blessing